

THE RED SHELL MONEY OF WESTERN MELANESIA

BY WALTER J. EYERDAM

I have an 18-inch necklace of red shell money of extra fine quality. It was purchased at Rossell Island (St. Aignan's) at the source of its manufacture for one pound, which is the standard price throughout most of the islands of Western Melanesia for this particular kind and quality. The shell money is called sappy-sappy and consists of discs $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in diameter cut out of a species of *Spondylus*. The interior is white while the lip is a deep red. Only the upper valve is used, as the lower one is cemented fast to the rock upon which it grows. This *Spondylus* is found at a depth ranging from 5 to 10 fathoms.

This shell is very valuable to the natives of Papua and the Solomon Islands as a source of red and white shell money so highly esteemed as ornaments and heirlooms.

That this shell is quite rare I am certain, because in all of my intensive collecting of shells on more than a hundred beaches in the Solomons and New Guinea I found only four or five badly worn upper valves. The only localities where I found these few were near Kieta on Bougainville Island and on an islet near Tulagi Island. It was evident at first sight that these worn valves were cast up from deep water.

Sappy-sappy, or red and white shell money, is manufactured in only two places, and naturally at the best beds. One is on Rossell Island near Papua and the other in the Maravo lagoon near Malaita Island. There being so little of the red part on the shell, the rest being white, it is proportionately of higher value. The occurrence of this shell is very limited and restricted to only two or three good beds. The work of diving to a depth of 40 to 60 feet and the great amount of work expended in cutting out the tiny discs with primitive tools, and polishing them, is very laborious.

Polished sappy-sappy is worth twice as much as unpolished. Red money has four times the value of white money. The finest quality of clear color is selected for the kind to be polished.

This native money has a standard price and seems to hold its

own with British money. It generally represents the larger denominations of coin, and is chiefly used in purchasing wives, pigs, and paying fines and debts amongst the natives. It generally forms the principal hoarded wealth of a family and constitutes one of the chief values of heirlooms.

THE ECOLOGY OF THE LAND MOLLUSCA OF ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

BY A. F. ARCHER

Although Asheville, North Carolina, is very accessible, it has not up to the present time been studied from the point of view of its mollusk fauna. In June 1934 a collecting trip was undertaken to Asheville for the purpose of studying the *Polygyrae* of the *Stenotrema* group, and along with this much data were obtained on the land mollusks in general. The places in which the collections were made consisted of the eastern part of the city of Asheville, Sunset Mountain and Rich Mountain (also known locally as Rich Knob). Sunset Mountain flanks the whole eastern side of Asheville and rises to an elevation slightly exceeding 3100 feet above sea-level. It is part of a horse-shoe shaped mountain mass, and is itself the western arm of the shoe, Rich Mountain forming the center of the loop, and rising to an altitude of 3535 feet, and Piney Mountain forming the eastern arm of the shoe. The shoe itself embraces a basin known as Chunn's Cove.

To understand the present day ecological conditions it is necessary to note the past history of the locality. Anthropoeic (human) factors have been the most active in producing the present conditions and in altering the ecology of the mollusks. Clearing and fires have produced certain perceptible changes, as is apparent if one studies for purposes of contrast the same faunal assemblage in less disturbed localities. These changes have been as great in the case of the mollusks as they have been in the case of the plants. The Asheville area has been repeatedly fired and lumbered. Fires here as elsewhere have been very detrimental to some species, and beneficial to others. However, it is not intended here to discuss the reasons for this, but simply to state as a fact